
Wisconsin Forestry Notes

March 2003

Wisconsin DNR - Division of Forestry

Forest landowners seek relief from property taxes

Applications for Forestry's Managed Forest Law (MFL) program reached record numbers in 2003. The MFL defers most of the property taxes on private forestland until timber is harvested, provided the landowner agrees to manage their land using sustainable forest management practices outlined in a long-term forest management plan. There were 3,989 applications processed for 2003 (up 22% from 2002). Although the applications have not been all processed yet for 2004, it will be an even bigger year for the program with applications topping the 4,000 mark.

For background information about the Managed Forest Law, go to:

<http://www.dnr.state.wi.us/org/land/forestry/ftax/>

Number of applications for 2004 entry into the Managed Forest Law program top 4,000.

Assembly Bill Addresses Gypsy Moth Program

AB9 provides that the DNR establish a gypsy moth suppression program and promulgate administrative rules to implement the program. This follows the November 7 ruling when the Joint Committee for the Review of Administrative Rules temporarily suspended the DNR 40-acre rule and reduced the minimum spray block to 20 acres. AB9 requires the rules to specify an area of at least 20 acres for insecticide treatment. Assembly Amendment 1 specified that the spray blocks be contiguous and compact in size. Assembly Amendment 2 requires rules promulgated by the DNR to implement the gypsy moth program to require an eligible applicant to notify landowners and tenants in and around the spray block. It specifies that notification must include publication of a notice in a local newspaper at least 10 days prior to an objector deadline. Likewise, a public hearing must be held at least 7 days prior to the objection deadline. The Assembly Committee on Forestry voted 5-0 in support of this bill as amended. The DNR supports this amended bill.

Assembly proposal would reduce the minimum gypsy moth spray block from 40 to 20 acres.

Resolution Supports Sustainable Forest Management

Assembly Joint Resolution 18 acknowledges the vast extent of Wisconsin's forest resources and its vital contribution to the Wisconsin quality of life. The resolution encourages efforts to further enhance our forest resources and sustainable forest harvest techniques being promoted by the Sustainable Forestry Initiative, Forest Stewardship Council, and other credible forest certification systems such as ISO 14001 and the Tree Farm program. The resolution specifically states, "The Wisconsin Legislature expresses its support for the use of sound, scientific, and sustainable forest management harvest techniques in order to preserve and maximize the use and enjoyment of Wisconsin's forests, and for the attention and efforts of the Sustainable Forestry Initiative and the Forest Stewardship Council and other credible sustainable forestry certification systems." The Assembly Committee on Forestry recommended adoption. The DNR supports this resolution.

Forest certification, or green certification, is an attempt to identify forest land that is well managed and to bring wood from these "well-managed" forests to the marketplace. The Division of Forestry has been tracking the certification issue over the past decade. Last year the Division explored the topic in a supplement to the Wisconsin Natural Resources magazine. Read this online at <http://www.wnrmag.com/supps/2002/feb02/intro.htm>

"Forest certification is one tool to recognize good forest stewardship and promote responsible forest management practices in Wisconsin," according to State Forester Paul DeLong.

Education requirements for DNR foresters considered

Assembly Bill 12 requires every forester hired by the DNR subsequent to passage to have received a bachelor's or higher degree in forestry from a school of forestry with a curriculum accredited by the Society of American Foresters. The bill is an outgrowth of concerns expressed within the forestry community that a double standard exists with respect to the requirement for hiring foresters by DNR and by partner organizations, specifically the County Forests and Private Cooperating Foresters. The Assembly Committee on Forestry heard the bill on February 11 and subsequently voted 5-0 to advance the bill with two amendments. The first amendment clarifies that the focus of the bill is on field foresters, and the second allows the DNR to accept candidates with degrees that provide the equivalent to what they would have received with an SAF accredited degree in forestry. The DNR supports AB 12, as amended.

Department foresters would be required to have a degree in forestry from an accredited institution under Assembly Bill 12.

Division predicts early fire season

Department personnel and partner agencies are completing required training and forest fire equipment readiness checks in anticipation of an early and prolonged spring forest fire season in Wisconsin. Division of Forestry, Forest Fire Protection Bureau Director Trent Marty bases his prediction on these factors:

- * Wisconsin has been experiencing a drought situation since last fall with precipitation about half of normal (you can track drought conditions online at <http://drought.unl.edu/dm/>);
- * A moderate El Nino will continue to affect the Great Lakes Region this spring but appears to have peaked earlier this winter;
- * The National Weather Service 90-day forecast (Feb - April) is for below-normal precipitation in the region;
- * Frost is 4.5 to 5 feet deep in the soil (according to reports from grave diggers and construction company representatives) causing a later-than-normal green-up this spring;
- * Temperatures and precipitation this winter in the Great Lakes Region have been comparable to the winters of 1957/58 and 1969/70, both El Nino years and both with drier-than-normal conditions during February through April over much of the Eastern United States;
- * As indicated below, spring fire seasons associated with those years marked the beginning of drought periods in the Lake States resulting in significant numbers of fires and acreage burned.

Year	Number of Fires	Acreage Burned
1958	1,841	16,123
1959	1,205	29,817
1970	2,729	10,654

(Wisconsin averages 1600 fires that burn 7,000 acres in a typical year.)

- * Lack of significant snowfall across Wisconsin this winter has resulted in a fall forest fire season that extended into January 2003. Within the Department's organized forest fire protection area (a little over 50% of the state), we have had 260 forest fires that burned 851 acres since October 1, 2002. This is a significantly greater number of fires and acreage burned than normal for that time of year.

Based on this information, Marty predicts that the spring forest fire season will potentially extend into late May in Northern Wisconsin unless significant precipitation arrives before then. "Drier than normal conditions will result in significantly more fire ignitions becoming forest fires and potentially greater amounts of acreage burned than normal," Marty concluded. For more information, contact Trent Marty at 608-266-7978

DNR officials expect an earlier-than-normal fire season will begin in mid-March. But Department personnel and partners are ready for this fire season, predicting a higher-than-average number of fires and acreage burned this spring.

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